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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 6721
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4052
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 7605
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2663
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0744
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 8773
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 6950
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SUBJECT: BRAZIL'S FOREIGN MINISTRY UNDERSTANDS DEA ROLE IN REGIONAL COUNTERDRUG FIGHT

¶1. (SBU) On November 18, Ambassador Sobel met with Brazilian Ministry of External Relations (MRE) Under Secretary for Political Affairs Ambassador Everton Vargas to inform him of our intention to increase DEA staff in our offices in Brasilia and Sao Paulo in light of the Bolivian government's decision to expel DEA. Accepting our diplomatic note on the matter, Vargas said he understood how complicated the situation is and said that Bolivian Government Minister Rada had visited Brazil to discuss counternarcotics cooperation. What Bolivia wants, however, Brazil cannot deliver: Bolivia wants to renegotiate a 1988 protocol on counterdrug cooperation to allow for production of coca leaf, but Vargas said that Brazil could not agree to this in light of international conventions it had signed.

¶2. (SBU) Vargas also said that MRE officials had been clear with Rada that Brazil cannot replace DEA in Bolivia. Brazil does not have the expertise, resources, or personnel to do so. At the same time, Brazil recognizes that it is essential to help Bolivia fight drug trafficking; "We will be the main victims," Vargas said, if trafficking out of Bolivia increases. Vargas pointed to the upcoming UNASUL ministerial in Porto Alegre as the venue where regional support for Bolivian counterdrug efforts would be discussed.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Vargas did not give a clear "yes" or "no" to the issue of increased DEA staffing, but the tone and substance of his discussion were unusually open and suggest an understanding of the potential problem for Brazil created by DEA's departure from Bolivia and the irreplaceable role that DEA plays in fighting drug trafficking in the region. Vargas identified Director of the Office of Transnational Illicit Activities Virginia Toniatti as the primary point of contact at the MRE on the matter. Although she is generally resistant to cooperation with the United States, and the GOB has held up DEA visas in the past, the Federal Police have repeatedly expressed support for increased DEA staffing in Brazil and there appears to be a policy-level consensus that Brazil can neither afford to replace DEA nor allow trafficking from Bolivia to increase. This bodes well, but only GOB issuance of visas for staffers slated to take up posts in Brazil will demonstrate a commitment to allow DEA to increase its presence here. End comment.
SOBEL